

Swann's Drugstore (Niobrara Tribune)
5th Avenue and Elm Street
Niobrara
Knox County
Nebraska

HABS No. NE-33

HABS
NEB,
54-NIOB,
11.

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DISCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NE-33

SWANN'S DRUGSTORE (Niobrara Tribune)

- Location: North side of Elm Street, 125' east of the intersection with 5th Avenue, Niobrara, Knox County, Nebraska.
- USGS Niobrara Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 1.4579580, 473380.
- Present Owner: United States of America (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District).
- Present Use: Vacant, scheduled to be demolished. (Demolished after this documentation was written in 1977).
- Significance: From 1905 to the late 1970s, the building served as the home of town's newspaper, Niobrara Tribune. After the disastrous flood of 1881, the Tribune Building was among the surviving structures moved to the new second townsite of Niobrara. Architecturally, the building is an excellent example of nineteenth century pioneer commercial architecture with a false front and large display windows, and representative of the type structure which played an integral part in the streetscape of a thriving Niobrara.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The structure was built in the 1870s.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The building was erected in the original town of Niobrara in the 1870s and was moved to the second townsite in 1882 by Arthur C. Mellett.

In 1886, the building was purchased by Isabella T. Swann, wife of Dr. Swann, and was used as both a drugstore and doctor's office. The property was sold in 1898 to W. K. Clark, a doctor in town, and continued to operate as a drugstore/doctor's office under the name of the Palace Drugstore with George L. Adams as the proprietor. E. S. Kendall, editor and publisher of the Niobrara Tribune, purchased the property in 1905 for use as his newspaper office. From this time on, it always functioned as a newspaper office with title being held by F. C. Marshall, Allen Stinson and William Swartzler, all editors over the years. It was sold by Mr. Swartzler to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1974 for \$7,400.

The original and subsequent owners of the east side of lot 4, block 1 of Starr's Addition to West Niobrara, from the Register of Deeds, Center, Knox County, Nebraska are as follows:

- 1881 Deed August 5, 1881, recorded August 5, 1881, Book D, page 344, James Starr to Henry E. Bonesteel. For consideration of \$600 for numerous properties
- 1882 Deed May 13, 1882, recorded May 13, 1882, Book D, page 583, Henry E. Bonesteel to L. C. Mellett. For consideration of \$500 for two lots, including the east side of lot 4
- 1886 Deed January 12, 1886, recorded January 27, 1886, Book G, page 628, Arthur C. Mellett to Isabelle T. Swann. For consideration of \$125 for the east side of lot 4
- 1898 Deed June 13, 1898, recorded December 19, 1898, Book W, page 247, Isabella T. Swann to Irving Clendenen. For consideration of \$2,000
- 1898 Mortgage November 4, 1898, recorded December 14, 1898, Book 4, page 16, Irving Clendenen to Isabella A. Swann. For consideration of \$200 (Mortgage assigned to Etta Penney, January 22, 1898, recorded October 20, 1899, Book 5, page 356)
- 1898 Deed December 19, 1898, recorded December 19, 1898, Book W, page 249, Irving Clendenen to W. K. Clark, M.D. For consideration of \$2,500 plus taxes due and "taxes on drug stock for 1898 and assume \$200 mortgage on lot."
- 1905 Deed January 8, 1905, recorded May 1, 1905, Book 32, page 522, W. K. Clark and wife to E. S. Kendall, editor and publisher of Niobrara Tribune. For consideration of \$600
- 1905 Mortgage February 25, 1905, recorded September 23, 1905, Book 11, page 459, E. S. Kendall and wife to Chris Larsen. For consideration of \$600 mortgage on two lots (Release February 1, 1909, recorded February 3, 1909 book 21, page 580)

- 1909 Deed February 1, 1909, recorded February 3, 1909, Book 39, page 149, E. S. Kendall and wife to Fred C. Marshall. For consideration of \$1,650 for east side of lot 4
- 1927 Affidavit July 16, 1927, recorded July 27, 1927, Book 13, page 586, George W. Snow to The Public Arthur Melette, Governor of South Dakota, for clarification of name
- 1927 Affidavit July 14, 1927, recorded July 27, 1927, Book 13, page 586, E. A. Houston to The public "Said property, when owned by Isabelle T. Swann was never used as a homestead but as drugstore-- She lived in east part of Niobrara-- Husband Dr. V. N. Swann died 1922.
- 1927 Deed July 22, 1927, recorded August 31, 1927, Book 58, page 63, Fred C. Marshall and wife to Allen S. Stinson. For consideration of \$3,900 for east side of lot 4
- 1927 Mortgage August 30, 1927, recorded August 31, 1927, Book 52, page 453, Allen Stinson and wife to Fred C. Marshall. For consideration of \$3,400 (Release June 11, 1927, recorded June 28, 1929, Book 56, page 58)
- 1929 Mortgage June 27, 1929, recorded June 28, 1929, Book 55, page 226, Allen Stinson and wife to State Bank of Niobrara. For consideration of \$5,200 (Release October 4, 1930, recorded October 4, 1930, Book 58, page 84)
- 1930 Mortgage October 2, 1930, recorded October 3, 1930, Book 58, page 102, Allen Stinson and wife to State Bank of Niobrara. For consideration of \$4,480 (Release November 9, 1933, recorded November 24, 1933 Book 60, page 247)
- 1933 Mortgage November 15, 1933, recorded November 16, 1933, Book 60, page 248, Allen Stinson and wife to Bank of Niobrara. For consideration of \$400 (Release December 18, 1934, recorded December 10, 1934, Book 61, page 313)
- 1934 Mortgage December 5, 1934, recorded December 7, 1934, Book 61, page 325, Allen Stinson and wife to Bank of Niobrara. For consideration of \$450 (Release December 21, 1935, recorded December 21, 1935, Book 63, page 97)

- 1935 Mortgage December 19, 1935, recorded December 20, 1935, Book 63, page 101, Allen Stinson, widower to Bank of Niobrara. For consideration of \$300 (Release March 2, 1937, recorded March 3, 1937 Book 63, page 282)
- 1937 Mortgage February 20, 1937, recorded February 24, 1937, Book 63, page 278, Allen Stinson to Bank of Niobrara. For consideration of \$450 (Release March 2, 1938, recorded March 3, 1938 Book 63, page 399)
- 1942 Deed April 8, 1942, recorded May 18, 1942, Book 68, page 250, Allen Stinson to Wilbur A. Stinson and Kathryn E. Stinson (children of Allen). For consideration of \$1.00
- 1973 Deed June 29, 1973, recorded August 31, 1973, Book 94, page 499, Kathryn E. Tichy (nee Stinson), et al to William S. Swartzter. For consideration of \$7,000
- 1973 Mortgage June 29, 1973, recorded August 31, 1973, Book 91, page 471, William S. Swartzter and wife to Bank of Niobrara. For consideration of \$20,000 (Release November 25, 1974, recorded November 25, 1974, Book 92, page 817)
- 1974 Deed November 8, 1974, recorded November 25, 1974, Book 96, page 516, William S. Swartzter and wife to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. For consideration of \$7,400

4. Original plan and construction: Unknown.
5. Alterations and additions: The Tribune Building has been virtually unaltered from its original plan.

B. Historical Events or Persons Associated with the Structure:

The first known use of the building was a drugstore and doctor's office under the ownership of Isabella T. Swann who purchased the property in 1886 for \$125.

In 1905, E. S. Kendall purchased the drugstore building to be used for the new quarters of the Niobrara Tribune office. The newspaper had been established back in 1889 by J. C. Santee but was at that time in competition with the Niobrara Pioneer, the first long standing newspaper of the community (established 1874) run by a strong and sometimes outspoken editor, Edwin A. Fry. The Pioneer was dissolved in 1905 and the Tribune finally came into its own. It was operated by E. S. Kendall as editor-publisher until its sale in 1908 to F. C. Marshall.

In the early 1920s, Ed Fry returned to the Niobrara newspaper business as editor of the Tribune under F. C. Marshall and held this position on and off until the Tribune was sold to Allen Stinson in 1927. He was probably one of the greatest boosters for Niobrara's commercial success and often used the newspaper as a soap box to voice his civic concerns. The original Niobrara Centennial, published in 1956, fondly referred to Mr. Fry as ". . . staunch in his belief that Niobrara would be a thriving city and (was) forever loyal to us. It might be said that he carried about a pocket full of dreams about Niobrara's possibilities." Mr. Fry was also involved in the history of Niobrara and often did short local histories for the newspaper.

Allen S. Stinson served as editor-publisher of the Niobrara Tribune from 1927 to 1932. He had come to Niobrara in 1924 to manage the farmer's union store after being both school teacher and county superintendent in the area. In 1927, he purchased the Niobrara Tribune and was an enthusiastic booster of Niobrara, promoting such projects as Island Park (a recreational park area to the west of Niobrara), a golf course for the area, the Missouri River Bridge and other civic concerns. Stinson served as state senator for four years, deputy county clerk two years, county superintendent eight years, and Knox County judge from 1933 until his death in 1942. The Tribune remained in the Stinson family after Allen Stinson retired from its operation in 1932. Kathryn (later Kathryn Tichy) and Wilbur Stinson, daughter and son of Allen, took over the editorship and ran the paper until 1973 when it was sold to William S. Swartzler.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Photocopy of newspaper building with contrasting paint details (far right), early twentieth century. Included in the HABS collection.

Photocopy of the Tribune Building in background-circa 1930s or 1940s. Included in the HABS collection.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and published sources:

Deed Books, Register of Deeds, Center, Knox County, Nebraska

Interviews:

Kathryn Tichy, former editor of the Tribune, Interview July 3, 1977, uses of rooms in building, background on father, etc.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Niobrara Bicentennial Committee. Niobrara Centennial, 1856-1956 (updated, 1976). Niobrara, Nebraska: Verdigre Eagle, 1976.

Niobrara Tribune. Newspaper articles, March 2, 1905, February 4, 1909, June 2, 1921, April 22, 1926

3. Likely sources not yet investigated: Fry's Wonderful Magazine, a publication at the turn of the century, on microfilm at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Niobrara Tribune Building, which is one of the oldest structures in Niobrara, is an excellent example of nineteenth century pioneer commercial architecture. This one-story frame structure with clapboard false front has remained virtually unaltered in its physical appearance over the years. Its distinguishing features include a bracketed cornice line, striped canvas awning, painted display window signage, and vaulted ceiling in the interior.
2. Condition of fabric: The condition of the building ranges from poor to good. Its interior floors are badly undulated due to settling conditions.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building, rectangular in shape, measures approximately 21' (three-bay front) x 66'. It is a one-story structure.

2. Foundations: The building sits on poured concrete with infill dirt. The sills are deteriorating.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: White painted clapboard covers the south (front) facade. The rear of the front facade is clad in unfinished clapboards which run diagonally along the gable roof pitch. The side walls are covered with previously painted clapboarding. A elongated panel runs across the lower section of the front facade on either side of the front double door. The lower sections of the north and west walls are tarpapered and secured with horizontal batten. The entire east wall is covered with vertically battened tarpapered.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood frame construction supports the building.
5. Chimneys: The building has two chimneys. One projects approximately four feet above the roof at the rear of the commercial area. A second smaller stack, three feet high, is centrally located in the residential area. A metal vent projects from the roof toward the front of the building.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: A central commercial type door entrance stands about three feet from the street. Each door has two rectangular glass panes. A rounded corner, two-paned transom is just above the entrance. A side door on the west side of the structure provides access to the residence from what once was a narrow alley. This door has two long rectangular panes with a three-paned transom above and simple panels below. A rear north door leading into the living room is similar in design with the exception of the upper transom.
 - b. Windows: The lower half on the front facade is predominantly glass. Four large display windows are on either side of the central double doorway. The upper corners of these windows are rounded, echoing the rounded detail found in the transom above the front entrance. Two narrow side rectangular windows, again with rounded upper corners, are on either side of the doorway. A long elongated panel, previously mentioned, is found below the front display windows on either side of the doorway. The left front display window contains a painted signage which reads "Niobrara Tribune Newspaper Job Printing." All side and rear windows are simple, double-hung one-over-one sash windows with two four-over-four sash windows in the living room (rear northeast room).

The front bedroom, also in the rear, has two-over-two sash windows set horizontally.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: A simple gable roof covers the entire length of the structure with a false front in front of the structure. Mineral surface asbestos shingles cover the roof.
- b. Cornice, eaves: A heavy molding is on the top of the false front and is supported by coupled ornamental brackets, evenly spaced across the front. The cornice line extends approximately one foot beyond the false front on either side and is supported by a single carved bracket.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: Front double doors provide access to commercial space housing all printing equipment. A door on the north wall leads to a storage closet and connecting hallway between the commercial and residential spaces. The kitchen is accessible through the connecting hallway. A dining area is southeast of the kitchen. To the south of the dining area is a small bedroom and to the north is a living room. Just behind the kitchen to the north is a full bath with a small narrow bedroom further north. Exits are provided off the kitchen and also through the rear living room.
2. Flooring: The building has even width hardwood flooring throughout, except that some areas in residential and commercial section are covered with patterned linoleum sheeting.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Most interior walls are composed of horsehair plaster. The walls in the residential area are covered with decorative wallpapers. The commercial area is covered with beige composition paper attached in a batten-like fashion with narrow wooden strips later covered with paneling. An unusual shallow arched ceiling is found in the commercial area. The entire south wall of the kitchen separating the commercial from residential areas (including the door) is covered with beaded tongue-and-groove woodworking. Baseboards, found only in some rooms, are of simple dimensional lumber with quarter round moldings.

4. Doorways and doors: The only notable interior door is that separating the commercial and residential sections of the building. This door is a standard four-raised panel door which has been adapted into a windowed door with a small prescription counter. This door is said to have been used as far back as 1886 when the building was a drugstore and a doctor's office.
5. Decorative features and trim: A striped manually operated awning runs across the front facade above the large display windows, providing decoration and shading.
6. Hardware: A movable black safe with painted gold trim stands against the north rear wall of the newspaper office. It is a combination safe made by the Cary Safe Company. Most interesting is the name F. C. Marshall painted in gold across the top. Fred C. Marshall purchased the Tribune in 1909 and held title to the building until its sale to Allen S. Stinson in 1927 and presumably the safe was acquired at that time.

A cast floral patterned plat and latch with porcelain door handle is found on the front exterior door.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: A gas space heater sits in the rear living room. There is evidence that a pot-bellied stove once stood in the commercial area.
- b. Lighting: The commercial area is lighted by modern suspended fluorescent fixtures. All other rooms are lighted by suspended incandescent fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building stands on the northside of Elm Street, 125 feet east of Fifth Avenue. It is flanked by a bakery on the west (now vacant) and a cafe on the east later used as the Niobrara Planning Office (now vacant).

Prepared by: Perry Benson
Architect
Historic American Buildings
Survey
and
Kathryn Burns
Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
Summer 1977

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Niobrara project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in co-operation with the citizens of the Village of Niobrara. The project was funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, in compliance with Executive Order 11593 as a mitigative effort in the construction of the Gavins Point Dam and Lewis and Clark Lake. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, chief of HABS, the project was completed in the HABS Field Office in Niobrara, Nebraska during the summer of 1977 by project supervisor Perry Benson (University of Pennsylvania), project historian Kathryn A. Burns (George Washington University), team foreman Larry Jones (Texas Tech University) and student architects Peter Darlow (McGill University), Lisa Becker (Notre Dame University) and Darl Rastorfer (University of Pennsylvania). The written historical and architectural data was prepared by Kathryn Burns, and edited by Susan McCown, a historian in the HABS office in August 1979. Three exterior photos were taken by Sam Amato in the fall of 1977.